

Cable project advances Akron to head of data race

Fiber-optic cable lines will give businesses new way to talk

By TABA HEATH
Small Business News

Warner Cable of Akron hopes to guide Northeast Ohio into the 21st century.

And small businesses are following its lead.

Warner is in the process of installing two-way, interactive fiber-optic cable in Akron and surrounding communities. With this technology, all area businesses and households will have more information networking capabilities available at their fingertips.

The technology makes communication possibilities endless, says Art Boyd, director of community relations for the Northeast Ohio division. "Any business can interface with another business, a library, a school, or anything else that is hooked up to the network," he says. It doesn't matter whether a computer, television or telephone is used, Warner's new

network can support any type of information.

A business with access to a fiber-optic line, for example, can tap into an Internet or a local database warehouse, encyclopedia at the library or even access information at the local bank.

Businesses choosing to have the fiber-optic capabilities must pay Warner for the hookup, much as a company would pay for a new telephone line. Officials decline to estimate the cost, saying prices will vary depending on the location—and length of fiber-optic cable line.

"By having the infrastructure in place, this allows businesses to have the availability for high-speed data transfer throughout the county," says Steve Fry, president of Warner. "This technological cable will support video and data in one line to a business or home. The network is now in place."

Warner plans to finish installing new cable in the Greater Akron area by next January. Then, the company plans to upgrade Stark County, followed by Youngstown. That will complete its Northeast division. Warner Cable currently serves 200,000 customers. Half of those are located in the Greater Akron area.

Boyd says no other business entity in the area has networked quite like Warner Cable. "In the past, people have thought of us only as a video company. This [fiber-optic cable] allows us to be much more than just that. We are a data connectivity provider, a communications company."

Warner hopes to become the alternative provider of communication access and services for Northeast Ohio.

Fry agrees with the growing belief that more people will work out of their homes in coming years and that business and residential communications will come together.

"Twenty years ago, businesses followed the work force. Now businesses follow technology," he says. "This [fiber-optic technology] is good for economic development, because businesses are going to follow the highway, where their communication needs are enhanced."

Fiber-optic cable uses very thin, flexible cylinders of glass or plastic to carry light waves in wide bands of frequency.

It can carry a larger amount of signals for a greater distance, compared to coaxial cable, whose signals need to be amplified more often.

Greater Akron area upgrade installation schedule:

February: Howe Ave., North St., Britain Rd., Main St., I-76, Route 59
March: Exchange St., Steiner Ave., Rt. 59, Rt. 8, Akron Peninsula Rd., Exchange St., Portage Path, Downsview Akron
April: Cuyahoga Falls Ave., Cuyahoga River, Furnace St., Main St., Steiner Ave., Rt. 224, S. Main St., I-77
May: I-76, Rt. 224, I-77, Hamilton Ave., Wooster Ave., East Ave., Manchester Rd.
W. Market St., Frank Blvd., Greenwood Ave.
June: Exchange/Opportunity Parkway, Wooster Ave., Greenwood Ave., Frank Blvd., Hawley Ave., W. Market St., N. Portage Path, Kennore Blvd., Manchester Rd., Barges St., Firestone Parkway.
July: I-76, Britain Rd., Eastwood Ave., Salsburg St., Triplett Blvd., N. Hawley Blvd., Sand Run Parkway.

These areas will be upgraded September 1993-January 1995:

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| Berrien | Munroe Falls |
| Cowardin Township | Norton |
| Cuyahoga Falls | Silver Lake |
| Dorsetown | Springfield Township |
| Fairlawn | Stow |
| Lakemore | Tullmage |
| Mogadore | Wadsworth |

Warner's new system will be a hybrid—meaning both coaxial and fiber-optic cable is used, Warner says. A hybrid system is more cost effective and efficient.

Warner Cable was able to upgrade the backbone of its existing system, spending \$60 million on improvements, because of the merger last May between its parent company, Time Warner Entertainment Co., and US West, a communications company. This acquisition brought increased capital dollars for use in design.

The merger of cable companies with telephone companies is becoming popular. Southwestern Bell Corp. and Cox Cable an-

nounced its partnership late last year—joining the cable television company into a high-powered information provider.

Last month, the Clinton administration unveiled a new telecommunications policy, aimed at speeding up the much-touted information superhighway. It relies on competition rather than the regulated monopolies of today. The White House hopes this will create better services and lower prices.

With the help of Warner, Akron will be ahead of the game. "We are now poised to be a competitive bidder for communication services within the Greater Akron area," Boyd says.

Two-way TV service arrives

- Interactive features and lots of new programming are coming from Warner Cable, thanks to fiber optics

BY JANET MOORE
Beacon Journal business writer

The much-touted information superhighway has rolled into the Akron area.

Beginning at the end of January, Warner Cable will be installing equipment to offer customers interactive services that essentially allow you to talk to your television. Company officials say the technology is the first of its kind in Northeast Ohio.

Warner announced the news Tuesday, simultaneously revealing news of expanded programming, including 12 new channels. Of course, cable bills could go up, too, depending on your service.

Warner Cable is able to offer \$60 million in improvements largely because of US West's \$2.5 billion investment in Time Warner Cable, a subsidiary of Time Warner Entertainment Co.

"The US West deal afforded

our local operation the opportunity to introduce the first wave of this new interactive technology directly into the home now," said Bill Farmer, vice president of operations and public affairs for the company's Northeast Ohio Division.

Last May's agreement was the first of its kind between a former Bell System telephone company and an owner of both cable TV and programming operations. It calls for Time Warner to upgrade its cable system to carry telephone services, dial-up shopping and movies, paperless bill-paying and other two-way services, as well as traditional one-way news, sports and entertainment.

That's happening in Akron now, albeit on a limited basis.

Warner Cable officials say the telecommunication possibilities

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CABLE

• Shopping services, bill-paying will go fiber optic

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are endless, thanks to a state-of-the-art fiber-optic network the company began installing last year.

For now, it means parents, using a personal code word, may control their children's viewing habits by blocking out any channels they choose.

Or, those who want to watch sports but aren't sure what channel to flip on can consult a 12-hour on-screen guide for listings.

Warner Cable customers may also program their favorite channels into their remotes, bypassing, perhaps, infomercials or real estate listings. The remote control will function much as a mouse does for a personal computer.

And to order a pay-per-view movie or event, subscribers won't have to fumble with special codes. That movie will be available at the push of a button.

Warner has more news.

Twelve new channels — including the much-demanded Weather

Channel, Court TV and ESPN 2 — will also be offered to those who pay for them.

Premium channels, HBO 2 and 3, and Showtime 2, which have different programming from regular HBO and Showtime, will also be offered, plus a new premium channel called FLIX, featuring movies from 1960 through the '80s.

The new services will cost more, however. And understanding the rate structure can be complicated.

To receive programming beyond Warner's basic tier requires a new, in-home terminal. That will cost \$3.45 a month, not including a remote, which will cost 15 cents a month.

The new fee replaces existing equipment charges that range from 6 cents to \$2.99 for a top-of-the-line terminal with volume control.

If you subscribe to Warner's Satellite Tier, which includes such popular cable stalwarts as CNN and MTV, as well as the People's Choice Package (Discovery, Amer-

ican Movie Classics and WTBS), then you will need the new equipment and will pay a minimum of 46 cents more a month for it.

Then there are the programming charges.

For the 12 new channels, the programming cost is 95 cents a month for those who already have the People's Choice Package, or \$2.95 with either the Basic Tier or Satellite Tier.

Warner, which has 100,000 customers in the area, will install the new terminals from its technical hub in Akron and work out toward the suburbs. The entire system should be installed by February 1995.

Warner Cable customers will be notified in writing a month before their area is outfitted.

How can all this happen? Fiber-optic cable is more reliable than coaxial and allows for the multiple communication capabilities, according to Warner Cable officials.

Fiber optics are thin filaments of glass through which light beams are transmitted over long distances carrying enormous amounts of data. In many cases they replace coaxial cable, the traditional way of transmitting programming.

Warner Cable will use a hybrid system, mixing fiber optics and coaxial cable, said spokeswoman Avis Boyd.

Here is a schedule of when new Warner Cable terminal installations should be completed in various areas of Akron bounded by the following roads:

- Howe Avenue/North Street/Brittain Road/Main Street: February.
- North/Interstate-76/state Route 59/Brittain Road: February.
- Exchange Street/Steiner Avenue/Route 59/state Route 8: March.
- Akron-Peninsula Road/Exchange Street/Portage Path/downtown Akron: March.
- Cuyahoga Falls Avenue/Cuyahoga River/Furnace Street/Main Street: April.
- Steifer Avenue/state Route 224/South Main Street/Interstate 77: April.
- Interstate 76/Route 224/Interstate 77/Hilbish Avenue: May.
- Wooster Avenue/East Avenue/Manchester Road: May.
- West Market Street/Frank Boulevard/Greenwood Avenue/Wooster Avenue: May.
- Exchange/Opportunity Parkway/Wooster Avenue/Greenwood Avenue: June.
- Frank Boulevard/Hawkins Avenue: June.
- Hawkins Avenue/West

Market Street/North Portage Path: June.

- Kenmore Boulevard/Manchester Road/Bartges Street/Firestone Parkway: June.
- Interstate 76/Brittain Road/Eastwood Avenue: July.
- Interstate 76/Seiberling Street/Triplett Boulevard: July.
- North Hawkins Avenue/Sand Run Parkway with Fairlawn: July..

Here's when areas outside of Akron should expect installation:

- Wadsworth/Wadsworth Township: March.
- Fairlawn and nearby areas: September.
- Cuyahoga Falls, Phase I: October.
- Cuyahoga Falls, Phase II: November.
- Munroe Falls: November.
- Silver Lake: November.
- Stow, Phase I: November.
- Stow, Phase II: December.
- Tallmadge: December.
- Barberton: December.
- Coventry Township: January.
- Doylestown: January.
- Norton: January.
- Lakemore: January.
- Mogadore: January.
- Springfield Township: January 1995.

Here are the new channels available under Warner Cable's People's Choice category:

- WGN (Channel 38)
- ESPN2 (Channel 39)
- Comedy (Channel 40)
- The Cartoon Channel (Channel 41)
- E! (Channel 42)
- Country Music Television (Channel 43)
- The Learning Channel (Channel 44)
- Bravo (Channel 45)
- Court TV (Channel 46)
- C-SPAN II (Channel 47)
- VHSN (Channel 48)
- Local Programming (Channel 49)

Here is what Warner Cable already offers:

- Basic Tier: Thirteen basic channels, including the major networks, FOX, PBS and QVC.
- Satellite Tier: Seventeen channels, including Black Entertainment Television, USA, CNN, MTV, ESPN and C-SPAN I.
- People's Choice: Discovery, American Movie Classics and WTBS.
- Optional: Fifteen channels, including Cinemax, The Disney Channel, Home Box Office and Showtime.

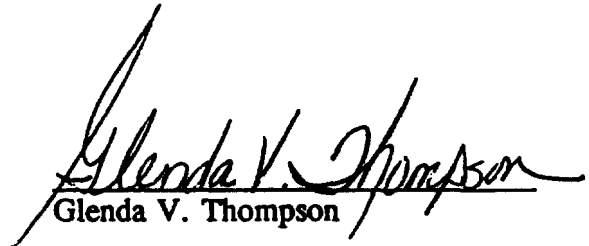
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Glenda V. Thompson, a secretary at the law firm of Fleischman and Walsh, hereby certify that copies of the foregoing "Reply" were served this 8th day of July, 1994, via first-class mail, postage pre-paid, except where noted otherwise, upon the following:

David Muntean, Esq.
Assistant Law Director
City of Akron
161 South High Street
202 Ocasek Building
Akron, Ohio 44308

Committee on Science, Technology
and Energy of the New Hampshire
House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building
Room 300
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Kathleen Franco*
Cable Services Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
2033 "M" Street, NW
Room 705B
Washington, D.C. 20554

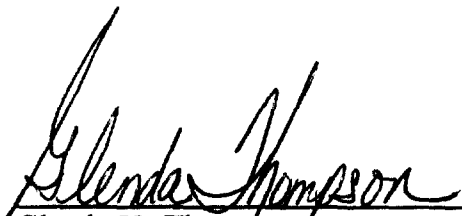

Glenda V. Thompson

*via hand delivery

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Glenda V. Thompson, a secretary at the law firm of Fleischman and Walsh, hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing "Opposition to Comments and Informal Request for Commission Action" was served this 28th day of July, 1994, via first-class mail, postage prepaid, upon the following:

David Muntean, Esq.
Assistant Law Director
City of Akron
161 South High Street
202 Ocasek Building
Akron, Ohio 44308


Glenda V. Thompson